Habitat Partnership Committee (HPC)
Priorities for Habitat Enhancement and Wildlife Management
2011

HPC projects are routinely funded with state revenues raised by wildlife conservation organizations (WCO) through the sale of Special Big Game License Tags. The HPC and WCOs agree that the primary emphasis should include on-the-ground projects that benefit wildlife, include implementation within a broader planning effort (e.g., landscape-level plan), and have at least a 1:1 cost share ratio. Previous habitat enhancement project proposals have included, but are not limited to, prescribed burns, wildlife water developments, and grassland restoration through thinning of juniper or mesquite trees. Research activities may be considered, but must provide a specific information need for improved management. Projects may be conducted on private land, but must have a clear demonstration of the public benefit of such projects. Administrative overhead is not viewed as adequate cost share in most instances. Projects should identify how successful implementation will be evaluated.

The following habitat enhancement and wildlife management priorities were developed by consolidating management needs identified in various Arizona Game and Fish Department planning documents, and identification by WCOs and other interested parties. These do not exclude project proposal submission on other priorities, nor preclude funding of projects that focus on other priorities. They are designed to provide a focused effort at seeking the types of projects for which the Department, WCOs, and other interested parties identify as priority needs and are meant to be a guide for the development of project proposals.

Mule Deer:

Manage and enhance habitats through partnerships with public agencies, property owners, lessees, and wildlife conservation organizations. Manage mule deer from a landscape perspective.

Maintain existing occupied habitat, with emphasis on retention of medium and high quality habitat, and maintain connectivity between habitats.

Improve the condition of declining or low-density herds through habitat improvement, research, herd management, or predator management.

Continue habitat enhancements to benefit mule deer.

Coordinate with transportation and development entities to maintain or enhance habitat connectivity among mule deer herds. Also work with the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) to determine the extent of vehicle-deer collisions and identify possible mechanisms to reduce the incidence or severity of such collisions. Focus on implementing known improvements, but seek higher cost share on these types of projects.

White-tailed Deer:

Manage white-tailed deer independently of mule deer, to the extent practicable, and from a landscape perspective.

Manage and enhance habitats through partnerships with public agencies, property owners, lessees, and wildlife conservation organizations.

Use prescribed burns, or facilitate habitat enhancement through fire management in white-tailed deer habitat.

Coordinate with transportation and development entities to maintain or enhance habitat connectivity among white-tailed deer herds. Also work with ADOT to determine the extent of vehicle-deer collisions and identify possible mechanisms to reduce the incidence or severity of such collisions. Focus on implementing known improvements, but seek higher cost share on these types of projects.

Pronghorn:

Maintain existing occupied habitat, with emphasis on retention of medium and high quality habitat, and maintain linkages between habitats. Preserve high quality checkerboard State Trust and private land through exchanges and/or other land protection measures to form contiguous blocks of State Trust land habitats.

Improve conditions of declining, low-density herds through research, herd management, supplemental translocations, habitat improvements, and predator management.

Identify important habitats for pronghorn populations and determine where protection and improvement are possible, in cooperation with public land management agencies, property owners, lessees, and wildlife conservation organizations. Manage pronghorn antelope from a landscape perspective.

Minimize pronghorn habitat fragmentation by reducing barriers and creating movement corridors through cooperation with private landowners and other land management entities.

Continue habitat improvement efforts where appropriate, and implement grassland habitat improvement projects within pronghorn antelope distribution. Pursue pronghorn habitat restoration projects to reduce canopy cover to ~<20% and tree density to ~<15/acre, as applicable with land management objectives and other considerations. Control burns and mechanical removal are both suitable methods for restoring grasslands invaded by woody species. Explore opportunities to plant or seed browse and forbs in conjunction with future juniper treatments.

Encourage livestock grazing practices and habitat manipulations that favor desired forbs and shrubs in pronghorn habitats and appropriate vegetation cover in key fawning areas as practical and appropriate.

Make all fences in pronghorn habitats compliant with Arizona Game and Fish Department pronghorn fencing standards. Implement mitigation measures including right-of-way fence removal, modification for wildlife permeability, or re-alignment as applicable and feasible; or the creation of over/under passes.

Restore the historical range of pronghorn antelope in Arizona by repopulating through translocations. Evaluate and initiate, where appropriate, translocations into southern Arizona.

Pursue water development projects in areas where water distribution is less than desired. Pursue partnerships with livestock producers to develop and maintain waters where mutually beneficial to both pronghorn and livestock.

Develop and implement creative techniques for predator population suppression in pronghorn fawning areas. Use predation management plans as a vehicle to implement control measures.
Determine limiting factors for recruitment.

Determine when and how to best implement predator control to improve recruitment.

Elk:
Manage and enhance habitats through partnerships with public agencies, property owners, and lessees, and wildlife conservation organizations. Manage elk from a landscape perspective.

Develop and adopt a forage monitoring program, through standard and scientifically sound principles, for the purposes of elk management to isolate the herbivory effects of only elk. Establish forage-based management triggers for elk populations in conjunction with land managers. Manage elk populations effectively within these forage use standards to maintain healthy and productive habitats.

Coordinate with transportation and development entities to maintain or enhance habitat connectivity among elk herds. Also coordinate with ADOT to determine the extent of vehicle-elk collisions and to identify possible mechanisms to reduce the incidence or severity of such collisions. Focus on implementing known improvements, but seek higher cost share on these types of projects.

Turkey:
Maintain existing occupied habitat, with emphasis on retention of medium and high quality habitat.

Maintain the range of all subspecies in Arizona by repopulating historical range through translocations; emphasize reintroduction of Gould's turkey, specifically within the Catalina, Santa Rita, Pinaleno, Chiricahua, and Galiuro Mountain Ranges.

Implement habitat improvement where appropriate. Use the turkey scorecard to identify and priority rank where efforts are needed to improve habitat quality in cooperation with land management agencies, property owners, lessees, and wildlife conservation organizations. Manage turkey from a landscape perspective.

Implement turkey habitat enhancement through mastication or prescribed fire projects.

Javelina:
Maintain existing occupied habitat, with emphasis on retention of medium and high quality habitat, and connectivity between habitats.

Manage and enhance habitats through partnerships with public agencies, property owners, and lessees, and wildlife conservation organizations. Manage javelina from a landscape perspective.

Bighorn Sheep:
Evaluate genetic diversity of bighorn sheep populations. Use results to evaluate future translocations.

Maintain existing occupied habitat, with emphasis on retention of medium and high quality habitat, and maintain connectivity between habitats.

Maintain the existing range of all subspecies in Arizona, and repopulate historical range through translocations. Translocations will continue into Hell's Half Acre, Mineral Mountains, Big Horn Mountains, and other suitable sites identified through habitat evaluations.

Improve the condition of declining or low-density herds through habitat improvement, research, conservative hunt management, or predator management.

Coordinate with the transportation and development entities to maintain or enhance habitat connectivity among sheep herds. Also work with ADOT to determine the extent of vehicle-sheep collisions and to identify possible mechanisms by which to reduce the incidence or severity of such collisions. Focus on implementing known improvements, but seek higher cost share on these types of projects.

Cooperate with land management agencies, property owners, and lessees to reduce adverse interactions between bighorn sheep, feral animals, domestic livestock, and predators.

Manage and enhance habitat, specifically including the development of new and maintenance of existing water catchments, through partnerships with public agencies, property owners and lessees, and wildlife conservation organizations. Manage from a landscape perspective.

Coordinate with federal and state land management agencies to implement invasive and noxious weed control and rehabilitation efforts in bighorn sheep habitat.

Buffalo:
Manage and enhance habitats through partnerships with public agencies, property owners and lessees, and wildlife conservation organizations.

Continue to pursue management opportunities to resolve bison issues associated with Grand Canyon National Park.

Black Bear:
Maintain existing occupied habitat, with emphasis on retention of medium and high quality habitat. Maintain connectivity in bear habitats.

Identify important habitats for bear populations and ensure protection and improvement, where possible, through cooperation with land management agencies, landowners, and wildlife conservation organizations. Manage from a landscape perspective.

Verify bear density and population estimates using DNA analysis approaches.

Determine if hair snags can be efficiently and effectively used by managers to assess populations.

Mountain Lion:

Maintain historically occupied habitat, with emphasis on retention of medium and high quality habitat, and maintain connectivity between habitats.

Identify important habitats and travel corridors for lion populations. Ensure protection and improvement where possible, through cooperation with land management agencies, other landowners, and wildlife conservation organizations. Manage from a landscape perspective.

Determine if and how the presence of surface water influences the movement and habitat use of lions, particularly in desert environments.

Determine whether genetic sampling can be effectively used to assess mountain lion populations in the state and identify the best way to obtain samples.

General or Multiple Species

Construction and maintenance of high priority wildlife water developments.